



Nonconforming vector finite elements for $H(\text{curl}; \Omega) \cap H(\text{div}; \Omega)$

Jean-Marie Mirebeau*

UPMC Univ Paris 06, UMR 7598, Laboratoire Jacques-Louis Lions, F-75005, Paris, France
CNRS, UMR 7598, Laboratoire Jacques-Louis Lions, F-75005, Paris, France

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ABSTRACT

We present a family of nonconforming vector finite elements of arbitrary order for problems posed on the space $H(\text{curl}; \Omega) \cap H(\text{div}; \Omega)$, where $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^2$. This result was first stated as a conjecture by Brenner and Sung (2009) [1]. In contrast an extension of the same conjecture to domains of \mathbb{R}^3 is disproved.

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Let Ω be a domain of \mathbb{R}^d where $d \in \{2, 3\}$. As explained in [1] several problems involving the space $H(\text{curl}; \Omega) \cap H(\text{div}; \Omega)$, such as the cavity resonance problem and the acoustic fluid–structure interaction problem, can be solved using nonconforming finite element methods. In contrast conforming finite element methods cannot capture the solution of these problems under certain conditions.

The accuracy of the approximate numerical solution of these problems can be improved if one uses finite elements which are not piecewise linear, but piecewise quadratic or of higher degree. For that purpose a quadratic nonconforming vector finite element for $H(\text{curl}; \Omega) \cap H(\text{div}; \Omega)$ was introduced in [1], in the case of a two dimensional domain $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^2$. The paper [1] also contains a conjecture which suggests a way of constructing nonconforming vector finite elements of arbitrary degree k for $H(\text{curl}; \Omega) \cap H(\text{div}; \Omega)$, for domains of \mathbb{R}^2 and of \mathbb{R}^3 .

In order to state this conjecture and to formulate our results, we need to introduce some notations. We use boldfaced letters to represent vectors. The space of polynomials of total degree $\leq k$ in d variables is denoted by $P_k(\mathbb{R}^d)$, and the space of homogeneous harmonic polynomials of degree k in d variables is denoted by $\mathcal{H}_k(\mathbb{R}^d)$. For each $k \geq 1$ and $d \in \{2, 3\}$ we define a space $\mathcal{P}_{k,d}$ of vector fields on \mathbb{R}^d as follows

$$\mathcal{P}_{k,d} := [P_k(\mathbb{R}^d)]^d \oplus (\nabla \mathcal{H}_{k+2}(\mathbb{R}^d) \oplus \cdots \oplus \nabla \mathcal{H}_{2k}(\mathbb{R}^d)). \quad (1)$$

For any triangle T if $d = 2$ (resp. tetrahedron T if $d = 3$) we consider a collection $\mathcal{N}_{k,d} = \mathcal{N}_{k,d}^1 \cup \mathcal{N}_{k,d}^2$ of linear functionals on $\mathcal{P}_{k,d}$, which is defined as follows. The elements of $\mathcal{N}_{k,d}^1(T)$ define the moments on T up to order $k - 2$, for the d components of the vector fields. Denoting by $\lambda_0, \dots, \lambda_d$ the barycentric coordinates on the simplex T , and by e_1, \dots, e_d a fixed basis of \mathbb{R}^d , these functionals have the expression

$$M_{i,\alpha}(v) := \int_T \lambda_0^{\alpha_0} \cdots \lambda_d^{\alpha_d} (\mathbf{v} \cdot \mathbf{e}_i),$$

for all $1 \leq i \leq d$ and all $\alpha = (\alpha_0, \dots, \alpha_d) \in \mathbb{Z}_+^{d+1}$ such that $\alpha_0 + \cdots + \alpha_d = k - 2$. The elements of $\mathcal{N}_{k,d}^2(T)$ define the moments up to order $k - 1$ on the $d + 1$ edges (resp. faces) of T , defined by $F_j := \{z \in T : \lambda_j(z) = 0\}$, $0 \leq j \leq d$, again for the d components of the vector fields. These functionals have the expression

$$M_{i,j,\beta}(v) := \int_{F_j} \lambda_0^{\beta_0} \cdots \lambda_d^{\beta_d} (\mathbf{v} \cdot \mathbf{e}_i),$$

* Correspondence to: UPMC Univ Paris 06, UMR 7598, Laboratoire Jacques-Louis Lions, F-75005, Paris, France.
E-mail address: mirebeau@ann.jussieu.fr.

for all $1 \leq i \leq d$, all $0 \leq j \leq d$, and all $\beta = (\beta_0, \dots, \beta_d) \in \mathbb{Z}_+^{d+1}$ such that $\beta_0 + \dots + \beta_d = k - 1$ and $\beta_j = 0$. We used in this definition the convention $\lambda_j^{\beta_j} = 0^0 = 1$ on F_j .

Brenner and Sung formulated in [1] a series of conjectures, which depend on the two parameters $d \in \{2, 3\}$ and $k \geq 1$.

Conj(k, d) : For any T the elements of $\mathcal{P}_{k,d}$ are uniquely determined by the linear functionals in $\mathcal{N}_{k,d}(T)$. (2)

The conjectures Conj(1, 2) and Conj(1, 3) are true and correspond to the nonconforming Crouzeix–Raviart P_1 vector finite element. It was established in [1] that Conj(2, 2) is true, thus defining piecewise quadratic nonconforming vector finite elements in two space dimensions.

The purpose of this paper is to establish the following result.

Theorem. For any $k \geq 3$ the conjecture Conj($k, 2$) holds. In contrast the conjecture Conj(2, 3) does not hold.

Our result therefore validates the construction of two dimensional vector finite elements of arbitrary degree proposed in [1]. On the contrary the three dimensional quadratic vector finite element is invalid. Our result does not completely close the conjecture as the cases of three dimensional vector finite elements of cubic or higher degree remain unsolved.

It was established in [1] that for all $d \in \{2, 3\}$, all $k \geq 1$ and all T , one has

$$\dim \mathcal{P}_{k,d} = \#\mathcal{N}_{k,d}(T).$$

Hence the conjecture Conj(k, d) is equivalent to the following property:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{For all } T \text{ and all } \mathbf{v} \in \mathcal{P}_{k,d}, \\ &\text{if } (l(\mathbf{v}) = 0 \text{ for all } l \in \mathcal{N}_{k,d}(T)) \text{ then } \mathbf{v} = 0. \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

In Section 1 of this paper we establish this property in the two dimensional case $d = 2$ and for an arbitrary $k \geq 1$. In contrast we give in Section 2 a counter example in the three dimensional case $d = 3$ and $k = 2$.

1. Proof of the two dimensional result

In this section the integer $k \geq 1$ is arbitrary but fixed. If $\mathbf{v} = (v_1, v_2) \in \mathcal{P}_{k,2}$ we remark that

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{v} = \frac{\partial v_2}{\partial x_1} - \frac{\partial v_1}{\partial x_2} \in P_{k-1}(\mathbb{R}^2) \quad \text{and} \quad \nabla \cdot \mathbf{v} = \frac{\partial v_1}{\partial x_1} + \frac{\partial v_2}{\partial x_2} \in P_{k-1}(\mathbb{R}^2).$$

Our first lemma extends to degree k an argument used in the initial paper [1].

Lemma. Let $\mathbf{v} \in \mathcal{P}_{k,2}$. Let T be a triangle and let us assume that $l(\mathbf{v}) = 0$ for all $l \in \mathcal{N}_{k,2}(T)$. Then

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v} = \nabla \times \mathbf{v} = 0. \quad (4)$$

Proof. We first note that $\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v}$ and $\nabla \times \mathbf{v}$ are polynomials of degree $k - 1$, and that the components of $\nabla \times (\nabla \times \mathbf{v})$ and of $\nabla(\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v})$ are polynomials of degree $k - 2$. In view of Green's theorem and the vanishing moments of \mathbf{v} , we have

$$\int_T (\nabla \times \mathbf{v})(\nabla \times \mathbf{v}) \, dx = \int_{\partial T} (\mathbf{n} \times \mathbf{v})(\nabla \times \mathbf{v}) \, ds + \int_T \mathbf{v} \cdot \nabla \times (\nabla \times \mathbf{v}) \, dx = 0$$

where \mathbf{n} is the outer unit normal along ∂T . Similarly, we have

$$\int_T (\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v})(\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v}) \, dx = \int_{\partial T} (\mathbf{n} \cdot \mathbf{v})(\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v}) \, ds - \int_T \mathbf{v} \cdot \nabla(\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v}) \, dx = 0.$$

The results follow. \square

We now rephrase the conjecture (2) in terms of complex functions, and for that purpose we introduce some definitions.

Definition. For any pair $\mathbf{v} = (v_1, v_2)$ of real valued functions we define a complex valued function $P_{\mathbf{v}}$ as follows

$$P_{\mathbf{v}}(x + iy) := v_1(x, y) - i v_2(x, y) \quad \text{for all } (x, y) \in \mathbb{R}^2.$$

We now note that the equations $\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v} = \nabla \times \mathbf{v} = 0$ are equivalent to the Cauchy–Riemann equations of $P_{\mathbf{v}}$, namely

$$\frac{\partial \Re(P_{\mathbf{v}})}{\partial x} = \frac{\partial \Im(P_{\mathbf{v}})}{\partial y} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\partial \Re(P_{\mathbf{v}})}{\partial y} = -\frac{\partial \Im(P_{\mathbf{v}})}{\partial x}$$

where $\Re : \mathbb{C} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ and $\Im : \mathbb{C} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ respectively refer to the real and imaginary parts. These equations characterize holomorphic functions. Let us introduce for all $m \geq 1$ the space \mathbb{C}_m of polynomials in the complex variable $z = x + iy$ and of degree less or equal to m

$$\mathbb{C}_m := \left\{ P = \sum_{r=0}^m a_r z^r \mid (a_0, \dots, a_m) \in \mathbb{C}^{m+1} \right\}.$$

If $\mathbf{v} \in \mathcal{P}_{k,2}$ satisfies $l(\mathbf{v}) = 0$ for all $l \in \mathcal{N}_{k,2}$, then $P_{\mathbf{v}}$ satisfies the Cauchy–Riemann equations according to (4), and therefore $P_{\mathbf{v}} \in \mathbb{C}_{2k-1}$.

Definition. For any continuous function $P : \mathbb{C} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ and any $z_1, z_2 \in \mathbb{C}$ we define

$$I_{z_1, z_2}(P) = \int_{t=0}^1 P(z_1 + t(z_2 - z_1))(z_2 - z_1) dt = \int_S P(z) dz \quad (5)$$

where $S \subset \mathbb{C}$ is the oriented segment from z_1 to z_2 .

Let S be an edge of a triangle T with endpoints (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2) and let $z_1 = x_1 + iy_1$ and $z_2 = x_2 + iy_2$ be their complex coordinates. Let $\mathbf{v} = (v_1, v_2) \in \mathcal{P}_{k,2}$ be such that $l(\mathbf{v}) = 0$ for all $l \in \mathcal{N}_{k,2}(T)$, and let $Q(x + iy) := R_1(x, y) + iR_2(x, y)$ where $R_1, R_2 \in \mathcal{P}_{k-1}(\mathbb{R}^2)$ are arbitrary. Since \mathbf{v} has vanishing moments up to order $k - 1$ on the edges of T we have

$$I_{z_1, z_2}(P_{\mathbf{v}}Q) = (z_2 - z_1) \int_{t=0}^1 ((v_1 R_1 + v_2 R_2) + i(v_1 R_2 - v_2 R_1))|_{(x(t), y(t))} dt = 0, \quad (6)$$

where we used the notations $x(t) := x_1 + t(x_2 - x_1)$ and $y(t) := y_1 + t(y_2 - y_1)$.

We now define a bilinear form which is related to our conjecture.

Definition. For all $Z = (z_1, z_2, z_3) \in \mathbb{C}^3$ we define a bilinear form $q_Z : \mathbb{C}_{2k-1} \times (\mathbb{C}_{k-1} \times \mathbb{C}_{k-1}) \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ as follows

$$q_Z(P, (Q_1, Q_2)) := I_{z_1, z_2}(PQ_1) + I_{z_1, z_3}(PQ_2).$$

Let T be a triangle and let $z_1 = x_1 + iy_1$, $z_2 = x_2 + iy_2$ and $z_3 = x_3 + iy_3$ be the complex coordinates of the vertices of T . If $\mathbf{v} \in \mathcal{P}_{k,2}$ is such that $l(\mathbf{v}) = 0$ for all $l \in \mathcal{N}_{k,2}(T)$ then $P_{\mathbf{v}} \in \mathbb{C}_{2k-1}$ as previously noted. Furthermore, specializing (6) to polynomials $Q \in \mathbb{C}_{k-1}$ we obtain

$$q_Z(P_{\mathbf{v}}, (Q_1, Q_2)) = 0 \quad \text{for all } (Q_1, Q_2) \in \mathbb{C}_{k-1} \times \mathbb{C}_{k-1}. \quad (7)$$

The purpose of the rest of this section is to show that the bilinear form q_Z is nondegenerate. It then follows from (7) that $P_{\mathbf{v}} = 0$ and therefore that $\mathbf{v} = 0$ which concludes the proof of the conjecture $\text{Conj}(k, 2)$.

We denote by $B := (1, z, \dots, z^{2k-1})$ the canonical basis of \mathbb{C}_{2k-1} , and by $B^* := ((1, 0), (z, 0) \dots, (z^{k-1}, 0), (0, 1), \dots, (0, z^{k-1}))$ the canonical basis of $\mathbb{C}_{k-1} \times \mathbb{C}_{k-1}$. We denote by $M(Z)$, or $M(z_1, z_2, z_3)$, the matrix of q_Z in the basis B and B^* . Hence for all $1 \leq i \leq 2k$ and all $1 \leq j \leq k$ we have

$$M(Z)_{i,j} = I_{z_1, z_2}(z^{i-1} z^{j-1}) \quad \text{and} \quad M(Z)_{i,j+k} = I_{z_1, z_3}(z^{i-1} z^{j-1}).$$

It follows that

$$M(Z)_{i,j} = \frac{z_2^{i+j-1} - z_1^{i+j-1}}{i+j-1} \quad \text{and} \quad M(Z)_{i,j+k} = \frac{z_3^{i+j-1} - z_1^{i+j-1}}{i+j-1}. \quad (8)$$

The explicit expression of the matrix $M(Z) = M(z_1, z_2, z_3)$, in the special case $k = 2$, is given right after the end of the proof.

Our next proposition gives an explicit expression of $\det M(Z)$, therefore showing that q_Z is non-degenerate. In the following Z always refers to the triplet of complex variables $Z = (z_1, z_2, z_3)$.

Proposition. One has

$$\det M(Z) = \alpha (z_1 - z_2)^{k^2} (z_2 - z_3)^{k^2} (z_3 - z_1)^{k^2}$$

where $\alpha = \frac{(\prod_{0 \leq i \leq k-1} i!)^5}{\prod_{0 \leq i \leq k-1} (2k+i)!} > 0$. Therefore q_Z is non-degenerate whenever z_1, z_2 and z_3 are pairwise distinct.

Proof. We denote by \mathbb{S} the collection of all permutations σ of the set $\{1, \dots, 2k\}$, and by $\varepsilon(\sigma)$ the algebraic signature of such a permutation. We recall that

$$\det M(Z) := \sum_{\sigma \in \mathbb{S}} \varepsilon(\sigma) \prod_{j=1}^{2k} M(Z)_{\sigma(j), j}. \quad (9)$$

For any permutation $\sigma \in \mathbb{S}$ one has

$$\sum_{j=1}^k (j + \sigma(j) - 1) + \sum_{j=1}^k (j + \sigma(k+j) - 1) = 3k^2.$$

It follows from (8) that $\det M(Z)$ is a homogeneous polynomial in the variables z_1, z_2, z_3 and of degree $3k^2$. We also note for future use that

$$\sum_{j=1}^k (j + \sigma(j) - 1) \geq k^2 \quad (10)$$

with equality if and only if σ leaves invariant the sets $\{1, \dots, k\}$ and $\{k+1, \dots, 2k\}$. For any $c \in \mathbb{C}$ we define two $2k \times 2k$ triangular matrices $P(c)$ and $P^*(c)$ associated with the following changes of basis on \mathbb{C}_{2k-1} and $\mathbb{C}_{k-1} \times \mathbb{C}_{k-1}$ respectively

$$\begin{aligned} P(c)B &= (1, z+c, \dots, (z+c)^{2k-1}) \\ P^*(c)B^* &= ((1, 0), \dots, ((z+c)^{k-1}, 0), (0, 1), \dots, (0, (z+c)^{k-1})). \end{aligned}$$

One easily sees that the matrices $P(c)$ and $P^*(c)$ are upper-triangular and have ones on the diagonal, hence $\det P(c) = \det P^*(c) = 1$.

Since

$$I_{z_1+c, z_2+c}(z^i z^j) = I_{z_1, z_2}((z+c)^i (z+c)^j)$$

we obtain

$$M(z_1+c, z_2+c, z_3+c) = P(c)^T M(Z) P^*(c).$$

Recalling that $\det P(c) = \det P^*(c) = 1$, and choosing $c = -z_1$, we obtain

$$\det M(0, z_2 - z_1, z_3 - z_1) = \det M(Z).$$

The explicit expression of the matrix $M(0, z_2 - z_1, z_3 - z_1)$, in the special case $k = 2$, is given right after the end of the proof. It follows from (8)–(10) that the polynomial $\det M(Z)$ is a multiple of $(z_2 - z_1)^{k^2}$. Similarly, $\det M(Z)$ is a multiple of $(z_3 - z_1)^{k^2}$.

Subtracting column $k+i$ from column i , for all $1 \leq i \leq k$, we find that

$$\det M(z_3, z_2, z_1) = (-1)^k \det M(Z)$$

and therefore $\det M(Z)$ is also a multiple of $(z_3 - z_2)^{k^2}$. Since $\det M(Z)$ is a polynomial of degree $3k^2$ in the complex variables z_1, z_2, z_3 , and since $(z_1 - z_2)^{k^2}$, $(z_2 - z_3)^{k^2}$ and $(z_3 - z_1)^{k^2}$ have no common factors, there exists a constant $\alpha \in \mathbb{C}$ such that

$$\det M(Z) = \alpha (z_1 - z_2)^{k^2} (z_2 - z_3)^{k^2} (z_3 - z_1)^{k^2}.$$

In order to compute the constant α , and to show that $\alpha \neq 0$, we remark that it is the coefficient of z^{k^2} in the polynomial $\det M(0, z, 1) = \alpha (-z)^{k^2} (z - 1)^{k^2}$. The explicit expression of this matrix, in the special case $k = 2$, is given right after the end of the proof.

The contribution of a permutation $\sigma \in \mathbb{S}$ to $\det M(0, z, 1)$ is a monomial which has degree k^2 if and only if (10) is an equality. Denoting by \mathbb{S}^* the collection of permutations of the set $\{1, \dots, k\}$, we obtain that $\det M(0, z, 1)$ equals

$$\left(\sum_{\sigma_1 \in \mathbb{S}^*} \varepsilon(\sigma_1) \prod_{j=1}^k M(0, z, 1)_{j, \sigma_1(j)} \right) \left(\sum_{\sigma_2 \in \mathbb{S}^*} \varepsilon(\sigma_2) \prod_{j=1}^k M(0, z, 1)_{j+k, \sigma_2(j)+k} \right) + \mathcal{O}(z^{k^2+1}).$$

Hence using (8)

$$\det M(0, z, 1) = z^{k^2} \det \left(\frac{1}{i+j-1} \right)_{1 \leq i, j \leq k} \det \left(\frac{1}{i+j+k-1} \right)_{1 \leq i, j \leq k} + \mathcal{O}(z^{k^2+1}).$$

This expression gives the value of α as the product of two Cauchy determinants, which can be computed using the formula, established in [2, Section I.1.3],

$$\det \left(\frac{1}{a_i + b_j} \right)_{1 \leq i, j \leq k} = \frac{\prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} (a_i - a_j) \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq k} (b_i - b_j)}{\prod_{1 \leq i, j \leq k} (a_i + b_j)}.$$

This concludes the computation of $\det M(Z)$. \square

The following explicit expressions of the matrix M , if $k = 2$ and $z, z_1, z_2, z_3 \in \mathbb{C}$, may be useful to the reader

$$M(z_1, z_2, z_3) = \begin{pmatrix} z_2 - z_1 & \frac{z_2^2 - z_1^2}{2} & z_3 - z_1 & \frac{z_3^2 - z_1^2}{2} \\ \frac{z_2^2 - z_1^2}{2} & \frac{z_2^3 - z_1^3}{3} & \frac{z_3^2 - z_1^2}{2} & \frac{z_3^3 - z_1^3}{3} \\ \frac{z_2^3 - z_1^3}{3} & \frac{z_2^4 - z_1^4}{4} & \frac{z_3^3 - z_1^3}{3} & \frac{z_3^4 - z_1^4}{4} \\ \frac{z_2^4 - z_1^4}{4} & \frac{z_2^5 - z_1^5}{5} & \frac{z_3^4 - z_1^4}{4} & \frac{z_3^5 - z_1^5}{5} \end{pmatrix}$$

$$M(0, z_2 - z_1, z_3 - z_1) = \begin{pmatrix} z_2 - z_1 & \frac{(z_2 - z_1)^2}{2} & z_3 - z_1 & \frac{(z_3 - z_1)^2}{2} \\ \frac{(z_2 - z_1)^2}{2} & \frac{(z_2 - z_1)^3}{3} & \frac{(z_3 - z_1)^2}{2} & \frac{(z_3 - z_1)^3}{3} \\ \frac{(z_2 - z_1)^3}{3} & \frac{(z_2 - z_1)^4}{4} & \frac{(z_3 - z_1)^3}{3} & \frac{(z_3 - z_1)^4}{4} \\ \frac{(z_2 - z_1)^4}{4} & \frac{(z_2 - z_1)^5}{5} & \frac{(z_3 - z_1)^4}{4} & \frac{(z_3 - z_1)^5}{5} \end{pmatrix}$$

$$M(0, z, 1) = \begin{pmatrix} z & \frac{z^2}{2} & 1 & \frac{1}{2} \\ \frac{z^2}{2} & \frac{z^3}{3} & \frac{1}{2} & \frac{1}{3} \\ \frac{z^3}{3} & \frac{z^4}{4} & \frac{1}{3} & \frac{1}{4} \\ \frac{z^4}{4} & \frac{z^5}{5} & \frac{1}{4} & \frac{1}{5} \end{pmatrix}$$

2. A counter example in three space dimensions

Let T_0 be the simplex of vertices $(0, 0, 0)$, $(1, 0, 0)$, $(0, 1, 0)$, $(0, 0, 1)$ and let P_0 be the harmonic polynomial of degree 4

$$P_0 := 3x + 10x^3 - 15x^4 + 3y - 18xy - 15x^2y + 30x^3y - 15xy^2 + 45x^2y^2 + 10y^3 + 30xy^3 - 15y^4 + 3z - 18xz - 15x^2z + 30x^3z - 18yz + 240xyz - 180x^2yz - 15y^2z - 180xy^2z + 30y^3z - 15xz^2 + 45x^2z^2 - 15yz^2 - 180xyz^2 + 45y^2z^2 + 10z^3 + 30xz^3 + 30yz^3 - 15z^4.$$

We define

$$u_0 := \nabla P_0 \in \mathcal{P}_{2,3}.$$

One can easily check using a formal computing program that all the linear functionals in $\mathcal{N}_{2,3}(T_0)$ vanish on u_0 , which shows that the conjecture $\text{Conj}(2,3)$, on quadratic vector fields in three dimensions, is not valid. The interested reader can download an ancillary file (see [Appendix](#)) joined to the online version of this paper, which contains these verifications.

Finding a quadratic vector finite element for $H(\text{curl}; \Omega) \cap H(\text{div}; \Omega)$ in dimension 3 thus remains an open question. Let us finally mention that, up to a multiplicative constant, u_0 is the only element of $\mathcal{P}_{2,3}$ on which all the linear functionals $\mathcal{N}_{2,3}(T_0)$ vanish.

Appendix. Supplementary data

Supplementary material related to this article can be found online at [doi:10.1016/j.aml.2011.09.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aml.2011.09.016).

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